

The Relationship among Social Media Use, Media Literacy and Anxiety



University
of Dayton

Anthony A. Dalpiaz, M.S.Ed.
Elana R. Bernstein, Ph.D.

University of Dayton
School of Education
and Health Sciences

ABSTRACT

Anxiety is on the rise in the world today. The American College Health Association (2018) surveyed 31,463 college students and found that 60.9% of the respondents had experienced overwhelming anxiety at some point within the last 12 months. This study examined the relationship between media literacy and anxiety levels in first-year college students who are high social media users.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- In one study, participants with high daily social media were most at risk for a diagnosable anxiety disorder (Vanucci et al., 2017).
- *Social media literacy* is critical thinking about social media, which includes being empowered with the knowledge and skills to analyze, evaluate, produce, and participate in social media (Tamplin, McLean, & Paxton, 2018).
- In one study, social media literacy served as a protective factor against other reported negative impacts (Tamplin et al., 2018).

DESIGN

Sample: $n = 82$ first-year college students enrolled in a Communications course.
Setting: Private, liberal arts university in Ohio.
Design: Quantitative correlational survey design.
Analyses: Pearson Product Moment correlations (r) were calculated between media literacy and anxiety as well as social media use and anxiety.

MEASURES

- 1. Media Literacy Questionnaire** (Simons, Meeus, & T'Sas, 2017) ---- Items are rated from 1 [*completely agree*] to 5 [*completely disagree*], such as:
 - *I know that media represent information in a selective way and know how to interpret media messages (e.g. implicit versus explicit media language, the structure of a text, article, film, video, etc.).*
 - *I can evaluate media content taking into account various criteria (e.g. accuracy of information, comparison of information, appreciation of aesthetic aspects).*
- 2. Adult Manifest Anxiety Scale – College** (AMAS-C; Reynolds, Burt, & Lowe, 2003)
- 3. Likert scale question reflecting social media habits.**

DISCUSSION

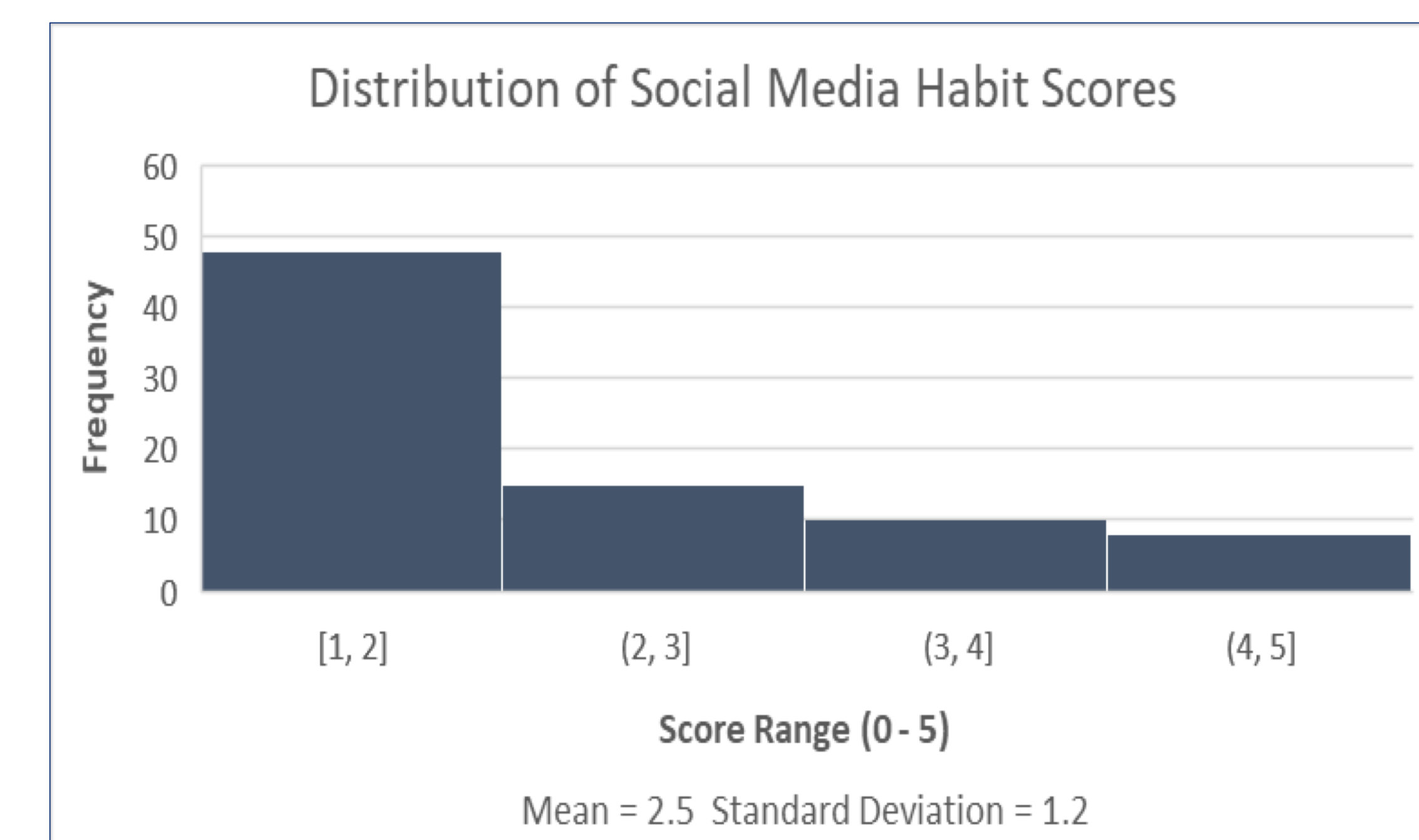
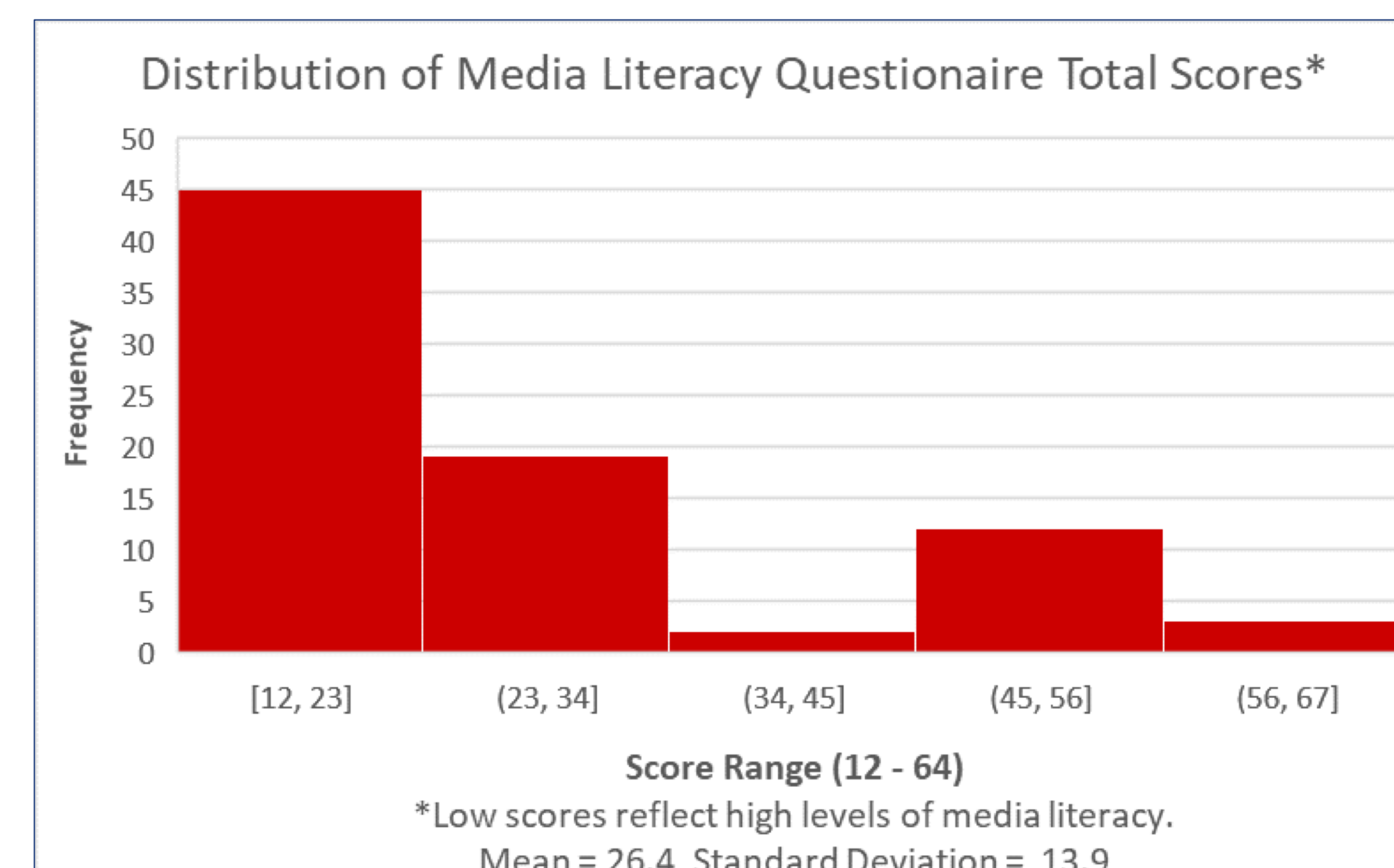
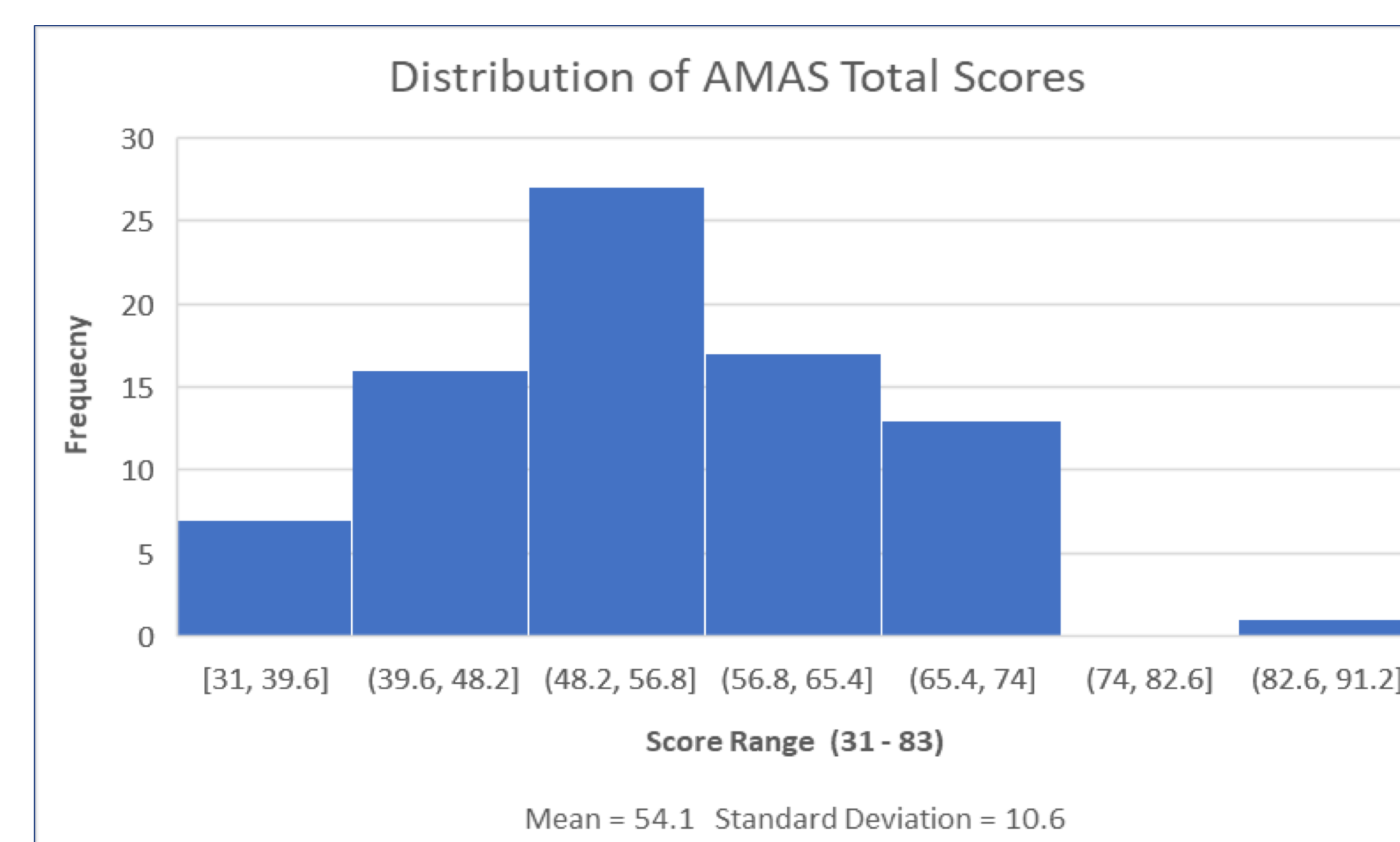
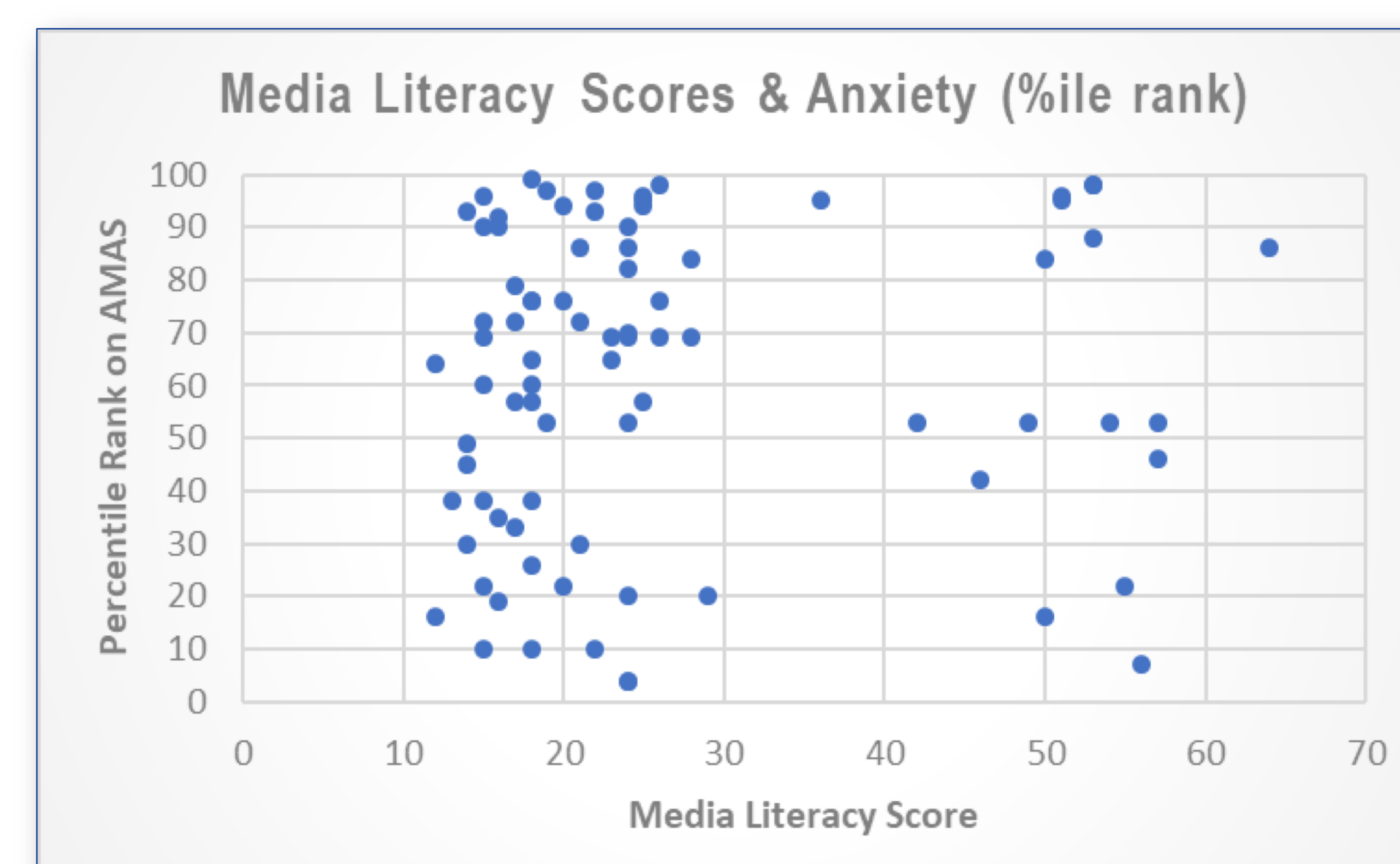
- This study corroborates previous research (i.e. Vanucci et al., 2017) that reported a link between social media use and anxiety.
- The data suggest that the less media literate a person is, the more likely they are to use social media at an increased rate.
- School psychologists might consider developing anxiety groups with a specific focus on addressing the nuances of social media.
- *Suggestions for future research:*
 - Further exploration of the relationship among these variables in K-12 students.
 - Qualitative exploration of *how* students use social media, as previous research has shown that time of day of use may impact individuals' wellbeing (Woods & Scott, 2016).

RESULTS

The correlation between social media habits and the media literacy score was significant, $r(79) = .51, p < .001$.

The correlation between social media habits and anxiety was significant, $r(79) = .24, p < .005$.

The correlation between the media literacy score and anxiety was not significant, $r(79) = .06, p > .005$.



References available on the back.